

Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message

A Bodhisattva I Met In a Jail

A few months ago, Mr. Mas Horiuchi, a volunteer Buddhist prison chaplain, and I received a request from Caroline to meet her at the women's correction center, where she was incarcerated. In a large common room, she was confined with other female inmates. Of course, there is no privacy there, being packed together with others for 24 hours under the strict prison rules and under the control of tough prison guards. In this surrounding, she encountered Buddhism and was practicing Nenbutsu Mindfulness.

"One day," she told us at the interview, "I could not stand what another inmate did to me. She and I began to be so mad at each other. Then, I shouted to her, 'Shut Up!' Immediately after that, I noticed that I was becoming disgusted with myself. I felt very bad. Then, I remembered the Nenbutsu Mindfulness I had learned. Right away, I said to her, 'I'm sorry.' She looked surprised and looked at me for a while, and then she said, "Thank you."

Wow! It must have been a very powerful moment not only for them, but to all others who were looking and listening to them.

At the interview, she also said to us: "I recently received my verdict. I can be out of here at the end of August. I can get out of here sooner than that, if I take some extra programs offered here and get additional credits. But, I decided not to do so. I decided to stay here till the end of my term. I want to make my jail life as the best opportunity in my life to learn and practice more. Some people, after leaving here as soon as they want, come back here within two months. But, I don't want to do that. I want to make my jail life as the best opportunity in my life to learn and practice more."

Wow! I thought I met a Bodhisattva in a jail.

Namu Amida Butsu,
Shaku Shoyo